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December 18, 2014

The Honorable Pam Bondi
Attorney General
State of Florida
The Capitol PL-01
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1050

Dear Attorney General Bondi:

Both as a citizen and a Member of Congress, I write to oppose your misguided decision to defend Florida's ban on marriage between same-sex couples. I find it shameful that you insist on spending taxpayer money to argue on the wrong side of history, while the State of Florida continues to discriminate against gay and lesbian Americans and deny them and their families critical rights and benefits under the law.

It has become increasingly clear that your view, and that of the State of Florida, is not shared by the majority of Americans. Since the historic June 26, 2013 Supreme Court decisions dismissing California's Proposition 8 and ruling as unconstitutional Section 3 of the *Defense of Marriage Act* (DOMA), 35 states across our great nation, as well as the District of Columbia, have recognized the freedom of committed same-sex couples to marry.

Furthermore, in 10 additional states, judges have also ruled in favor of marriage equality. They include Chief Circuit Judge Luis M. Garcia of Florida's 16th Judicial Circuit, Judge Sarah Zabel of Florida's 11th Judicial Circuit, and U.S. District Judge Robert L. Hinkle of the Northern District of Florida, who have all ruled the State's same-sex marriage ban unconstitutional. Your failed appeal to the U.S. 11th Circuit Court of Appeals and subsequent appeal to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas to extend the January 5, 2015 stay on Judge Hinkle's ruling serve only to delay justice, and represent an affront to equality for all Americans.

Our country faces many pressing challenges, and I fail to see how denying committed same-sex couples and their families the rights and benefits of marriage creates jobs, increases access to affordable, quality health care and educational opportunities, builds infrastructure, or provides any other solution to improve the lives of Americans. In fact, it does quite the opposite by making it harder for these individuals to realize their goals in life. The refusal of a state to even recognize the rights of same-sex couples legally married in other states constrains their ability to move freely within their own country, buy homes, and start families.

As public servants, it is our duty to do everything in our power to uphold the rights of our constituents, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Therefore, I urge you to immediately withdraw your support of Florida's same-sex marriage ban, and of all laws that discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Alice L. Hastings", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alice L. Hastings
Member of Congress